

**COUPONS**

Coupon Savings

**KENTUCKY CONNECT**

- [Home Page](#)

**NEWS**Herald-Leader  
Online

- [Business](#)
- [Financial News](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Kentucky](#)
- [Connect](#)
- [Tech Wire](#)
- [Motley Fool](#)
- [Editorial](#)
- [Features](#)
- [Books](#)
- [Comics](#)
- [Daily Crossword](#)
- [Faith and Values](#)
- [Food](#)
- [Gene Siskel](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [News Library](#)
- [Job Center](#)
- [Weather](#)
- [Lottery Results](#)
- [Classified Ads](#)
- [Subscribe Online](#)
- [Newspaper in Education](#)
- [AP Wire Service](#)
- [WKYT-TV](#)
- [Kentucky Kernel](#)

**SPORTS EXTRA**

- [Billy Reed](#)
- [Clickoff Classic](#)
- [Kentucky Hoops](#)
- [Kentucky Football](#)
- [Kentucky Hoofs](#)
- [Kentucky Blades](#)
- [Fantasy Football 98](#)
- [Sports Extra](#)
- [Sports Fan Ticker](#)

**SERVICES**

- [JusiGo](#)
- [Kentucky Connections](#)
- [Career Path](#)
- [Kentucky Cars.com](#)
- [Kentucky Connect](#)
- [Forums](#)
- [Kentucky Connect](#)
- [Tech Wire](#)
- [Fun & Games](#)
- [Real Books](#)

**KENTUCKY CONNECT**A service of the **LEXINGTON**  
**HERALD-LEADER**

Published Wednesday, January 6, 1999, in the Herald-Leader

**Effectiveness of counseling for abusers is in doubt**By **John Cheves**  
**HERALD-LEADER STAFF WRITER**

A Louisville judge ordered Troy Dewane Hughes to attend anger counseling in 1996 after Hughes hit and choked his wife, Kecia Hughes.

But 16 weeks of classes did not reform Hughes, just as court-ordered counseling often fails to help men who beat the women in their lives, experts said yesterday. Lexington police arrested Hughes, 33, Sunday on charges of strangling his 28-year-old wife in their Bainbridge Drive apartment.

Most counselors and judges take a skeptical view of such counseling for abusive men, even as the option is offered to men in exchange for lighter jail sentences. Kentucky judges have referred abusers to such programs for at least the past decade. But two national studies indicate that up to half of the men who graduate from counseling go on to abuse their partners again within five years.

"I think it's the easy out in some cases," said Sherry Currens, executive director of the Kentucky Domestic Violence Association in Frankfort.

"Court-ordered counseling tends not to be successful, and in some parts of the state, I think we're actually putting women at risk because the counseling is so inadequate," Currens said. "Some judges send the offenders off to their ministers to receive counseling, or to a very short program."

Recognizing a need for better counseling, the state Cabinet for Health Services has started -- as of this week -- to require minimal standards for mandatory domestic violence counseling. Among the new requirements are a minimal program length of 20 weeks -- one month longer than Hughes' program -- and a mandatory curriculum of non-violence training.

Each year in Fayette County, about 300 domestic abusers -- nearly all of them men -- are sent by judges to attend 24 weeks of counseling at the Comprehensive Care Center. To be admitted to the program, which can result in a shorter or probated jail sentence, abusers cannot have serious criminal records, and they must admit they have a violent temper.

"If someone won't admit they even have a problem, you really can't

- [Lexington Traffic Reports](#)
- [Headbone Zone](#)
- [The Meeting Place](#)
- [TV Listings](#)
- [Ticketmaster](#)
- [Kentucky Connect](#)
- [Media Kit](#)
- [Herald-Leader Advertising Guide](#)
- [Kentucky Connect](#)
- [Yellow Pages](#)

#### EXTRA EXTRA

- [Buddy Holly](#)
- [Calumet Farm](#)
- [Everly Brothers](#)
- [Primary '98](#)
- [College Guide '98](#)
- [IPIX Gallery](#)
- [Kentucky Car Makers](#)
- [Real Beans](#)
- [School Directory](#)
- [Street Skills](#)

#### SHOPPING

- [RealCities Shopping Guide](#)
- [Out of the Blue Book](#)
- [Real Books](#)
- [Ticketmaster](#)

#### KNIGHT RIDDER

### REAL cities

- [Privacy FAQ](#)

"If someone won't admit they even have a problem, you really can't get a foothold in which to start counseling," said Robert Walker, director of the Comprehensive Care Center.

In the program, the men meet in small groups for 90-minute weekly sessions, led by trained therapists. They discuss how men and women should interact, how to handle anger in a non-violent manner and how to communicate with their partner through words instead of through violence.

Is it successful? To a degree, yes, but Walker has no illusions.

"Studies show a modest effect (from court-ordered counseling). Anywhere from 30 to 50 percent of the men will reoffend again within five years of completing the program," Walker said.

"On the other hand," he added, "the lethality of the offenses do tend to be less serious (after counseling). He might continue to yell and push the woman around and not be particularly pleasant to be around. But it's less likely he'll seriously injure or kill somebody."

There are few national studies of domestic-violence programs to determine if they're effective. But even if they slowly learn to avoid physical violence, some abusers continue to be emotionally violent, screaming at their partners, slamming doors and making threats and accusations, Jeffrey Edleson of the University of Minnesota wrote in a 1995 report for the Minneapolis Domestic Abuse Project.

In the end, women should not be lulled into complaisance after their abuser completes a program, Currens said. That might have been what happened to Kecia Hughes, who returned to husband Troy and stayed with him even after he resumed his pattern of abuse, according to court records.

"We don't know why she stayed with him. We just wish we could have been able to help her make the break complete," said Jefferson Family Court Judge Patty Walker Fitzgerald, who sent Troy Hughes to counseling after his 1996 abuse conviction.

Added Fayette District Chief Judge Kevin Home: "It's a mistake to assume our judicial system has an answer to every social problem. We don't."

■

Staff writer Patricia Lynch Kimbro contributed to this report.

Copyright © 1999 by the Lexington Herald-Leader. No portion may be retransmitted, republished or reused in any form without written permission from the Lexington Herald-Leader and Kentucky Connect.